



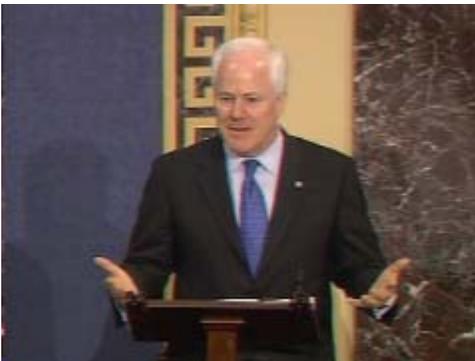
Update from U.S. Senator John Cornyn

Special Immigration Reform Edition

April 20, 2006

Immigration Reform Stalls in Senate

Next week, I expect the Senate Judiciary Committee to resume an important debate on how to strengthen our border security and immigration system. Our ultimate goal must be restoring the credibility of U.S. law. It is a critical issue, and after talking again this week, my appreciation for public concern about the consequences of our failed border policy has only increased. There is no agreement yet in the Senate, but I am committed, with others, to seeing this issue through to completion, and to sending an improved reform to the President by the end of the year.



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Quite frankly, I was surprised when the Democratic leadership suddenly pulled Senate immigration deliberations earlier this month. The Senate was only hours from the final passage of a "compromise deal" including nearly everything the Democrats wanted, particularly amnesty for nearly 12 million people currently in the country illegally.

I would have voted against the deal for numerous reasons. My overall goal has been to restore respect for our laws. In my opinion, the deal would have had the opposite effect: it would reward those who broke the law by putting them in line ahead of those who follow the law.

After the Judiciary Committee in March approved a version of the McCain-Kennedy bill by a 12 to 6 vote, my goal became clear: to improve that measure on the Senate floor. I hoped to get a better bill to conference with the House of Representatives. Thoughtful amendments were offered. But by using parliamentary tactics, the Minority Leader stopped them all — save a handful of uncontroversial ones.

Jon Kyl and I had introduced the first amendment, to bar from amnesty any felons, repeat criminal offenders and violators of our laws. That's when the vote blockage started; Democrats objected to even that commonsense approach.

The "compromise deal," reached later in the week among those who supported the McCain-Kennedy proposal, had numerous flaws: it almost all illegal immigrants on a different, easier path to a green card and citizenship, ahead of those who followed the law. It had no restrictions on information-sharing among law enforcement agencies, making fraud detection difficult. It was billed as a "temporary" program, but it provided permanent status for virtually everyone. Even so, the "deal" appeared to have majority backing in the Senate; the minority leadership withdrew its support.

I remain committed to restore respect for our laws, to improve our border and homeland security, to maintain a healthy economy, and to address directly the status of those individuals who have entered our country without documents. I will continue to advocate for a bill with Sen. Kyl that addresses all these concerns in a comprehensive manner.

In Senate debate on this issue, I have been superbly prepared by information supplied to me by a cross-section of Texans: both religious and community leaders, businessmen, union representatives, and civic activists representing all points of view. I am grateful for their knowledgeable contributions. I will continue to rely on first-hand experience from Texans as we continue to push for solutions to our challenges.

Laredo Crime Situation Prompts Federal Action

I'm encouraged by the federal government's recent action in response to the wave of violence — including drug-related crimes and kidnappings — that have directly affected the Laredo area. Last year, I asked U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales for more enforcement resources, and he has sent a Violent Crime Impact Team to Laredo. I also held a field hearing of my Senate Judiciary subcommittee in Laredo to gather more data on this problem and focus attention on resolving this troubling situation.

Earlier this month I sent a letter to Tony Garza, the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, asking him to press the Mexican government for help in controlling crime on their side of the border, and to assist me as I work to support the families whose loved ones are missing. I am confident that Ambassador Garza is working with Mexico to get needed information about these victims and is pressing for increased security to help hopefully restore peace to the border region.

Come By and Say Hello

If you are traveling to Washington for any reason, please consider visiting your U.S. Senate office. Every Tuesday morning when the Senate is in session, I hold an open house from 9:00 to 9:30 a.m. in my office in the Hart Building. Please telephone Landon Bell at (202) 512-2400 to let us know you'll be coming, and to get the best directions.

Best regards,

Senator John Cornyn

*P.S. Subscribe to my **Podcast** for the latest news or visit my **website** for a listing of **audio** and **video** clips.*